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ABSTRACT

American "New Journalism" of the 1880s and 1890s--a blend of the popular press and the elite political and literary journal creating a comprehensive general interest newspaper that informed, entertained, and editorialized on politics--became the model for the modern daily newspaper in the Western World. The American emphasis on news and the extensive use of the interview, human interest story, enterprise reporting and big headlines were soon seen in the major European newspapers. These American influences grew out of developments in the American Midwest and in New York City through the efforts of James Gordon Bennett, Jr., Joseph Pulitzer, and William Randolph Hearst. In spite of resistance from French and British editors and publishers, Bennett successfully introduced an American style newspaper in France, and Alfred Harmsworth adapted the American style for British readers. In the first years of the twentieth century, there was a great deal of cross-Atlantic employment in both directions, and European journalists became better acquainted with the American press. They thought that the American press was newsy and enterprising, but that it might be toned down a bit. By this time Americans were conducting their own bitter campaign against the excesses of "yellow journalism," but the modern direction was already set. At the start of World War I, journalists were working out a set of standards and a code of ethics that would encourage journalistic responsibility without ignoring the readers' interest in a good story. (HTH)

THE AMERICAN "NEW JOURNALISM" AND THE EUROPEANS

A paper presented in the AEJMC History Division's "Studies in Intellectual History Journalists' Visions of Journalism" session, "Corvallis, Oregon, August 6-9, 1983

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THE AMERICAN "NEW JOURNALISM" AND THE EUROPEANS

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ABSTRACT

American "new journalism" of the 1880's and 1890's became the model for the modern daily newspaper in the Western world. America's unique contribution was to blend two print traditions--the popular press with the elite political and literary journal--into a comprehensive general interest newspaper that informed, entertained and editorialized on politics.

French, English and Scandinavian journalists who visited the United States in these decades were keen observers of the new developments. Their insights offer a unique perspective on the American developments. They predicted its spread to Europe, and by the start of the 20th century the Americanizing influences--emphasis on news, extensive use of the interview, human interest story, enterprise reporting and big headlines--were seen in the major cities of Europe, especially in newspapers for the lower classes which had finally gained access to general education thus creating a new market of readers.

The American influences were also adopted and adapted by growing numbers of middle class and elite partisan European newspapers. The European journalists were astonished at the vitality of the American press and at its mixed audience. While they criticized the American press for its trivia and sensationalism, some observers admired its extensive news coverage and function as a democratic forum.

Foreign professionals saw the higher pay and prestige accorded American news reporters and contrasted that with the European high prestige for editorial writers and political essayists but not for reporters. There was some cross-Atlantic employment in both directions as the word of opportunity spread. Americans went to Europe to introduce the "new journalism." Europeans came to America to earn better pay and learn or offer instant expertise on European affairs. Information about the technological, economic and professional developments in journalism were widely circulated in Europe and America through these travelers and through the press club journals which were started at the end of the century.

The American influence on contemporary journalism, which grew out of developments in the American midwest and in New York City through the efforts of Joseph Pulitzer, James Gordon Bennett, Jr., and William Randolph Hearst, is not much noticed in the standard press history. This paper seeks to fill in some of the gap.

Presented to the History Division at the Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention in Corvallis, Oregon, August 1983.

During the 1880's and 1890's a keen group of European observers -- journalists and editors -- brought back to London, Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen and other European cities, samples of a "new journalism" that was sweeping America. They warned that the American style could infect Europe. The "new journalism" made use of big headlines, showy illustrations and lively writing to attract large circulations, fat columns of advertisements and huge profits. The old and respected American daily newspapers were losing ground against these news-hungry urban newspapers with their crop of energetic and bright young men and women reporters who dashed about the city gathering news.

This independent, enterprising journalism did not need political party backing. Its wealth came from advertising and mass circulation. A vast new reading public had been created by the growth of free public education in the years after the Civil War, and newspapers that reached these masses had the potential to sway and mold opinion on a scale not possible for a typically splintered party press. This lesson was not lost on Europeans, especially those who ran the respected party newspapers. Nor was it lost on the venturesome risk-takers who saw a similar market shaping up in Europe.

By the end of the century, Europeans would have examples of the "new journalism" in their capitol cities, and the Americanizing style with its emphasis on news, extensive use of the interview, human iterest story and enterprise reporting would gradually influence and change their highbrow newspapers as well.

This American journalism became the model for the modern daily newspaper in the Western world, but until recently few press historians have taken notice of this.[1] America's unique contribution was to blend elements from two separate print traditions: (1) the elite political newspapers and literary/essay journals, and (2) the popular penny and boulevard newspapers, police gazettes and story papers. The "new journalism"

used the emotional and sensational appeals of the popular press to attract new, unsophisticated readers and provide them with a sense of the wonder, excitement and danger of the modern city. But it also took a serious interest in political affairs, public welfare and working conditions and took the side of the working men and women in the city. The formula became increasingly successful in the growing industrial cities of the American midwest after the Civil War, although it sometimes seems to have burst upon the scene when Joseph Pulitzer introduced it in New York City in the New York World in 1883.[2]

The European perspective on America's new journalism provides a unique angle of vision on this key period in American press history. It highlights some of the features that were not so readily apparent in America, where these developments had been slow and gradual. "New journalism" was, of course, discussed on both sides of the Atlantic, and America had its admirers in Europe as well as its critics.[3]

One of the earliest Europeans to take note of the new developments in America was Theodore Child, who reported to English readers in 1885 that there were two main classes of journals in America. There were the "respectable and somewhat sleepy ones" of small circulation and the "enterprising and money-making ones" of large circulation, he said. "It is the pushing and unscrupulous journals you see in everybody's hands; it is against the keen competition of the popular one-and two-cent papers that the old-fashioned and respectable papers have to struggle," he observed. "But that battle was nearly decided in America; the high-class papers were the exceptions."[4]

This "new element" in journalism which was attracting large circulations and making sharp competition for the other city newspapers was introduced by the Pulitzer brothers, who had first developed these tactics in St. Louis, Missouri, Child explained.

In fact, as Z. L. White pointed out in Harper's Magazine in 1888, Joseph Pulitzer had pioneered the new approaches on his St. Louis Post-Dispatch from 1878 to 1883, before coming to New York City, and had developed his "aggressive muckraking and

champion-of-the-poor philosphy that battled entrenched powers, uncovered graft and corruption." But White noted that there were other independent newspapers run along the same lines throughout the midwest at that time, including: the Detroit News, the Chicago Daily News, the Cleveland Press, the Cincinnati Post and the Kansas City Star. The "Western newspaper," White explained, "is above all things, enterprising, and this quality, now so wonderfully developed is a legacy from the pioneer press."[5]

Europeans were frequently astonished at the vitality of the American press. In 1885, for example, New York City had a population of 1.3 million and 23 daily newspapers, while London, with a population of over three times that size, had only 18 daily newspapers. Three London newspapers which also circulated nationally had circulations of around 100,000, and the Daily Telegraph had about 300,000 circulation. Five New York City papers, which were essentially local, had circulations ranging from 100,000 to 190,000. Other New York City papers had substantial circulations, and there were 17 more dailies in nearby Jersey City and Brooklyn.

"New York is a veritable pandemonium of ephemeral prints springing into existence at every hour of the day and night," Child exclaimed. "Street Arabs howled their newspapers at every corner," and in the hotel lobbies, tram cars, the elevated trains and business offices along Broadway and Wall Street, Child saw men, women and children reading newspapers. The American press, he concluded, is generally, "trivial, sensational, and essentially vulgar...given to petty subjects and laboured conceits of language which pass for wit..." America had no great metropolitan papers like those of London or Paris, none with the national authority of a London Times or Paris Figaro, he noted. But Child did admire the way the vast United States had extended telegraphic communication so effectively that each city was connected to the major news centers by wire. This afforded American local newspapers with national coverage and features. Despite the American papers' "lack of literary and critical journalism" Child found them "not lacking in energy and enterprise, admirably free from bribery and well provided with the telegraphic news."[6]

Child was clearly enthusiastic about this democratic experiment, this America, a nation with the "most heterogeneous swarm of humanity that can be found on the face of the globe...living in a state of aggressive equality...where most people could read and vote and were daily absorbed in a keen struggle for material prosperity that was creating a social evolution such as the world has never before witnessed," [7]

A year later, W. T. Stead, editor of the Pall Mall Gazette in London (since 1881) discussed the "new journalism" which he was using in his newspaper. He believed it would "educate democracy in the functions of citizenship and make each citizen feel a part of the system."[8] He suggested that the party press was too far removed from the people and little cared for their welfare.

Despite these earlier discussion about the new developments in American journalism, most English sources believed Matthew Arnold was the first to use the term "new journalism" in his 1887 article that called Stead's English version "feather-brained" but "full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, and generous instincts."[9] Arnold criticized American newspapers, which he had seen on his travels in the United States, as "fit only for the servants' hall...raw, crude, and sensation-mongering."[10] It was this description of the "new journalism" that most frequently became associated with it in the discussions in England and later in the United States.

Americans previously had been talking about "modern" or "Western" or "American-style" journalism, but after 1889 they, too, began using the "new journalism" label. A full discussion of this "new journalism" was carried in The New Review (London) in 1889 in an article by T. P. O'Connor, editor and founder of the radical working class London daily, The Star (1888) which was also developing along the lines of the American model. O'Connor liked the new approach, and said England was "on the eve of a new departure in journalism, "adopting new methods, a more personal tone, more direct reporting of the people, how they look and what they say, and more vivid description of events." To the critics who worry that "we will soon be like America," O'Connor replied that England needed the new style to compete against the noise of the

street and train. It must strike the hurried reader "right between the eyes," be clear and crisp and sharp, without becoming "slanderous and full of gossip of a personal character."[11] This article was greeted with enthusiasm by the Americans, who read accounts of it in their professional magazine, The Journalist, issued in New York City.[12]

While the democratizing, commercializing and vulgarizing characteristics of America's "new journalism" usually took on a critical cast when discussed by the Europeans, the Americans still were able to take pride in developing the news orientation and enterprising reporting. Americans cheerfully recorded examples of American-style journalism in London and Paris from 1881 on.[13] The American usage of the term "new journalism" emphasized its positive and democratizing tendencies, and Americans tended to associate the criticisms of vulgarity and sensationalism with its extreme form, "yellow journalism", which marked the Pulitzer-Hearst press at the end of the century.

In Paris, publisher Albert Moise Millaud, ran the world's largest circulation newspaper, Le Petit Journal, which was read by nearly one half of the three million French newspaper readers of 1885. It was a non-political, small size boulevard paper, intended for the daily entertainment of city dwellers.[14] But that did not make Millaud sympathetic to the popularizing trend in America. On his return from a visit in 1886 he said American journalism had "killed literature and...reporting is in the process of killing journalism." By journalism he meant the editorials, essays and literary material most prized by the European press, not journalistic reports of events or meetings. "Reporting," he complained is creeping into the French newspapers and that was "the last word in literary decadancey."

In America reporting is the "God of the day," complained Millaud, but it was suitable for American readers who were "still in their infancy" and "incapable of understanding the great things of art and literature." Americans needed to be told "little stories" like children, he added. In his opinion there was not a line worth

quoting in a 20-page American paper, and "news enterprise" was just harassment of important visitors, such as himself. The American reporters "don't flinch at any vulgarity, audaciousness or humiliation. They wait for you in hotel corridors, interrogate you, and if you don't give them a few words, they'll just make it up." Millaud feared that Parisian papers were becoming Americanized because reporting was taking up a larger part of the newspapers, and interviews and headlines were becoming common.[15]

Reporting was defended the next day in Le Figaro by another French journalist who said it had been used there for 20 years. "Newspapers should give news, and reporting is necessary," he said, but added that he, too, disliked silly questions by American reporters. He thought French journalists could make reporting a "serious and respectable work."[16]

Parisians of 1885 were accustomed to a large selection of newspapers, political and literary journals. In the city of 2.2 million, there were 20 political morning dailies, 17 political afternoon and evening dailies and 10 popular (non political) papers.[17]

Reporting was also the major difference between the English and American newspapers, according to Scottish editor Arnot Reid on his return in 1887 from the U.S. "The English press belongs to the leader (editorial) writers, and the American press to the reporters." The English editor has seldom been a reporter, Reid explained, but the American editor has "almost always been a reporter." Englishmen want their editors to be men of letters, while Americans want men of letters, reporters and the commercially minded. Americans want a condensed record of the day's news and short, pithy editorials, while English editors seek a literary finish to the paper and seek out the jurist, philosopher, scientist, and man of letters for high-minded essays, he explained.[18]

The American editor turns to the smart reporter for "bright, racy, trivial, contemptible stuff" which should interest no one of any intellectual capacity," Reid said pointedly, "but which does interest 99 out of 100 people." And the American reporter goes out and gets the news, reporting meetings in a half-narrative, half-critical style with facts plus gossip and comments. His "stuff sells the paper" and his services are better paid than English reporters. English reporters, according to Reid, have to use shorthand, to produce verbatim accounts, and this "crushes narrative writing capacity." Americans value news over opinion and "mix in wit, humor and buffonery with serious matter," which allows for more creativity.[19]

American editors traveling in Europe were frequently sought out for their impressions of differences between the two types of journalism. The editor of the Philadelphia Press in 1888 told the London Journalist that the journalistic profession "has a more distinct and pronounced place in America than in England or on the Continent...partly because journalism is more impersonal...and the function of news gathering is more important in America." He explained that a large body of bright young men, 20 to 50 of them, is required for the local or city staff of leading American newspapers. And while their writing is "not as weighty and serious as the English," it is "more varied and vivacious and better reflects the daily life of the people."[20]

The American newspaper is "closer to the people...it enters directly into the whole social and everyday life...speaks directly to the individual and is written for all classes of people," he explained. Although there were no commanding figures like Greeley, Ramond and Bennett, this editor believed American journalism was on a higher plane than it had been 20 years earlier and that reporters had assumed more importance and a higher standing. In England, he observed, "the profession is limited to the editorial writers, department heads and top correspondents." Correspondents are highly valued in England while those who are mere reporters are not well paid, he explained. This difference clearly reflects the different emphasis of the two styles of journalism.[21]

American journalism is the "greatest and most wonderful achievement of American activity," enthused French journalist Paul Blouët (Max O'Rell) in his book about America in 1890.[22] "The American journalist may be a man of letters, but above all he must possess a bright and graphic pen, and his services are not required if he cannot write a racy article or a paragraph out of the most trivialling incident." He must tell the facts, but he must be entertaining and readable, and this makes the American paper a huge collection of short stories.

Colonel Charles H. Taylor, editor of the Boston Globe told Blouët that journalism was "like a business...a shopwindow...it had to be kept attractive." But in a free country, a democracy, it is also a "high calling," Blouët added. Americans care little for the journalist's opinions of the news; the American wants news not literary essays on the news, he explained.[23]

The contrast with France was clear, according to Blouët. French journalism "is personal and Frenchmen want to read opinions of writers and editors of the paper. The French journalist signs his articles and is a leader of public opinion. Journalism is considered a branch of literature." But Blouët saw some signs that American reporting was also being adopted in London in the Pall Mall Gazette and in The Star and in Paris in Le Figaro. He predicted that "as democracy makes progress in England, journalism will become more and more American."[24] He added that he thought English reporters would have some trouble trying to compete with the Americans in humor and liveliness.

"The American journalist...has to not merely know how to report...but to relate news in a racy, catching style...be a good conversationalist...alert...a man of courage...a man of honor. I have found him so. He keeps his word. No one need apologize for American journalism," he said.[25]

The American newspaper is a "conglomeration of news--political, literary, artistic, scientific and fashionable, of reports of trials, of amusing anecdotes, gossip of all kinds, interviews, jokes, scandals--the whole written in a style which sometimes shocks the man of taste, but which often interests and always amuses," Blouët explained. He

introduced his readers to the American city room, a place quite unlike the more serene offices typical of European publications. Fifty reporters have their stories ready, he said, and they pass before the heads of the departments who ask what the story is about. The editor assigns a length. The reporters go to the reporters' room and cut the article to the specified size. The same process is used for foreign correspondence, but by wire. Last to leave at about 2 a.m. is the chief editor who has read everything, sifted and corrected and put all in order.[26]

American journalism is the "natural outcome of the circumstances and democratic times we live in," Blouet stated. "Journalism cannot be what it was when read only by a few for the people of culture. In a democracy, the state and journalism have to please the masses of the people. As the people become better educated, the state and journalism will rise with them," he predicted.[27]

The dilemma posed by increasing democratization in Europe attracted Emile Zola's attention in 1894. He admitted that he "did not disapprove of a simple, clear and strong style" which characterizes the new press. "Such bad things are said about the press," he continued, but "the new form is information, and we must be re-taught. All men of age 50 miss the old press with its slow and measured style," he added. While Zola did not personally like the nervous excitement of the newspapers, he did "recommend that young writers work on these newspapers to learn about life." The press is "ever-changing and the public should make no final judgments about it," said Zola.[28]

Criticism of the "new journalism" was growing in America in the 1890's, and these critical American articles were discussed in the European journalistic magazines which monitored international publishing developments. Two articles from the American Forum of 1893 attracted attention in England and suggest the direction of American criticism. New York papers compared with those 12 years earlier showed a great rise in gossip and scandal stories, replacing literary, religious and scientific matter, charged Gilmer Speed.[29] The president of the New York Press Club and a New York newspaper editor, J. W. Keller,

said that the "American press was completely dominated by business and wholly at the mercy of capital." It was a young man's profession, he went on, with no job security and where hard work causes high in-service death rates or forces older men to drift out into politics or theatrical business. Pay is reasonably good during the first three years of reporting, but there are few places at the top, he added. The likelihood of a union to work for better conditions was slim.[30]

Although it became more and more fashionable to criticize the excesses of the American press as if they characterized the entire press, some European reporters remained enthusiastic. Henrik Cavling, for example, a top correspondent for the liberal daily, Politiken of Copenhagen, Denmark, made five trips to the U.S.A. during the 1880's and 1890's, during his service as a correspondent in Paris, Berlin and London. At the end of a cross-country tour of the United States in 1896-1897, Cavling visited James Gordon Bennett, Jr.'s New York Herald and Joseph Pulitzer's New York World.

Cavling admired the "new journalism" and its reporters. He was attuned to its underlying democratic philosophy. The success of the World, he said, "comes from its speed and technology, its independence from political parties and the broad-based audience. The reporter and the interview are the focus of these papers...this is ideal journalism. The emphasis is on news for the people and on a gathering together, rather than a divisive spirit in the press. These papers are produced by journalists, not by aesthetes and politicians, and they are written for the lower classes to help them, inform them and fight corruption for them," Cavling declared.[31]

He admired the American front page with its bold statements of the news of the day, set off by headlines and illustrations. His own newspaper carries mostly advertisements and one or two editorials on the front page at that time, as did most European daily newspapers, except the boulevard papers or the ones experimenting with the American style.

American newspapers are not "full of bickerings and one-sided politics like the European press," Cavling said. There might be too much sensation, he added, but there was also a lot of "good informative reading."[32] Cavling urged his editors to make the modern changes he had seen on his travels. But it was not until he became editor in 1905 that he was able to introduce the new style of journalism to Copenhagen, and thus to Scandinavia.[33]

The American style had already taken root in London, Berlin and Paris. In London, the pioneers in these efforts were the Pall Mall Gazette and The Star, as mentioned earlier. And in 1881, the Detroit Free Press began a weekly edition in London, edited by an American in London who culled the best and most entertaining stories from this Michigan daily. Although it was a newspaper in name and appearance, it contained little news and mostly the features Europeans associated with weekly magazines. Still, until 1899, it provided the English with a regular supply of American humor and feature writing on their home territory.[34]

In Berlin, a former Cologne and Frankfurt bookseller, August Scherl, founded the Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger in 1883, which he said was an attempt to imitate what he saw in the American newspapers that he read at the coffee house. He combined the German local advertiser (general-anzeiger) form with the American approach to news and features. He himself little cared for the lofty political arguments of the party press, and believed that others would feel the same. He was correct. Within weeks the circulation was at 152,000 and leveled off at 200,000, making him keen competition for the other publishers in Berlin.

There was a law prohibiting street sale of newspapers (in order to protect the party papers), but Scherl developed his own carrier system. His editor was well schooled in fast news delivery, having worked for James Gordon Bennett, Jr. and for Reuters wire service. Scherl's newspaper was the first in Germany to introduce the linotype and to make extensive use of the telegraph and telephone in gathering news, techniques that were well advanced by the Americans at this time, but slow to catch

on in Europe. The arrival of the Berliner Lokal Anzeiger went unnoticed in the professional journalism magazines of England, France and America.[36]

Nor did the first American-style newspaper in Paris receive press attention on its arrival. Le Matin appeared February 22, 1884, as the French edition of an English language Morning News founded in 1883 by Albert C. Ives and Samuel S. Chamberlain, two Americans in Paris. They used American-style headlines and news emphasis in both French and English language editions, and at the time had the only continental link to London by overnight wire.[37] Within six months, Le Matin attained the fourth largest daily newspaper circulation in Paris. By 1887 Le Matin had 33,000 circulation.[38]

Le Matin was American in appearance and approach to news. The front page featured multi-column headlines and news, including the latest wire stories from London. (Use of the front page as a news display showcase with large headlines and illustrations did not become common in Europe until the start of World War I.) Le Matin proclaimed its political and literary independence by featuring four weekly editorial writers of contrasting views, and introduced a new feature page called "The Last Hour" which replaced the continuous novel, then a regular feature in most daily newspapers.

The American owners sold Le Matin to a Frenchman in 1885, and the newspaper changed hands again in 1896 and 1903, but remained news-centered and politically independent. It was competitive with the more traditional French newspapers, cutting its number of pages to eight and holding down the price to keep its share of the market around the turn of the century.[39]

During the 1880's James Gordon Bennett, Jr., owner and publisher of the New York Herald, decided he preferred life in Paris. There were many like him in Europe, and he quickly saw a market for an American newspaper in English for wealthy tourists and businessmen. His established network of correspondents and wire connections made it easy for the Paris Herald, which he started in 1887, to be first with the news in Paris.[40]

Chamberlain had returned to the United States to work for Hearst in San Francisco, but Ives took over and edited the new Paris Herald. The new paper attracted reporters from New York City, who did not have to conform to European styles of journalism but could enjoy the cultural and culinary feasts of Paris.

Bennett's newspaper was a novelty at the Paris World's Fair of 1889, where he struck off a daily edition in the press pavilion. Bennett introduced the first linotypes in Paris in 1897, and taught the French something about speedy newspaper delivery. In August 1905, he began using automobiles to deliver the morning paper to subscribers about 125 miles away in Trouville by 6 a.m. This service was soon extended to other French provincial towns.[41] (Harmsworth in England was making similar efforts.)

Despite the American journalism of Bennett and others in Paris, French press historians say that these publication had little influence on the French press.[42] There is little mention of the American news style used by Le Matin in French press history. Instead, the French credit the Englishman, Alfred Harmsworth and his London Daily Mail of 1896 with driving home to them that there was a market for a cheap, news-oriented general interest newspaper along the American lines but written by and for Europeans. By 1900, the Daily Mail had reached a million circulation, and in 1904 introduced its overseas edition for the Continent. May 22, 1905, brought a Paris edition of the Daily Mail, which would compete for 22 years against the Paris Herald.[43] (The Paris Herald survives as the International Herald Tribune.)

The French resistance to Americanization was formidable. The French frequently discussed their preference for the elegance of style and wit in their own press and journals. They also enjoyed selecting from a large array of small-circulation and competing newspapers and resisted the move to fewer but mass circulation newspapers. To turn the newspapers into reporters of current events and everyday affairs and gossip was to lower journalism from its high cultural plane, they believed.[44]

Americanization met resistance in Enland, too, but nevertheless it flourished. American journalists were lured to London to work on the newspapers, especially those adopting the "new journalism." One editor who would remain for 30 years was Ralph David Blumenfeld, editor of the London Daily Express. He had come to London in 1887 as a special correspondent for the New York Herald, and edited Bennett's short-lived London Herald in 1890. His Daily Express, a halfpenny morning paper, was the first in London to place news on the front page. The halfpenny newspaper field was growing rapidly, attracting readers from the early products of England's expanded common school system. But reporters for these papers, Blumenfeld said, were treated as social outcasts by their colleagues until Alfred Harmsworth made the Daily Mail a serious power that could not be ignored.[45]

Harmsworth deftly molded the Americanizing features to suit English culture. He had first teamed up with Kennedy Jones to purchase the London Evening News and turn that into a news-oriented, enterprising paper for the middle class. Harmsworth visited American newspapers on his tour of the U.S. in 1894 and was impressed by the New York World. He had also gone to look at the plant of Le Petit Journal in Paris. Jones had worked with an editor from the New York Herald, who had taught him the American news style. Harmsworth saw much to admire in American journalism, but he believed the average Englishman would not care for it. So when he started his own halfpenny morning newspaper, The Daily Mail, in 1896, he gave it the appearance of a solid middle class London penny paper -- with advertising on the front page and news and editorials inside in their traditional places. But he introduced a bright writing style, stunts and enterprise reporting that soon gave readers "something to talk about."[46]

London was a city of 4.8 million then, with 22 competing daily newspapers, which divided the audience along class and political lines. The Times had 60,000 circulation, while the Daily Telegraph and Daily Standard each had about 300,000. These served the upper and middle class. The Daily Chronicle and Daily News with about 100,000 circulation each were middle class.[47] The Daily Mail sold 397,215 copies its first day,

and was up to half a million daily by the end of its first year. It demonstrated clearly that there was a market for the "new journalism." Its appeal was largely to the lower middle class, white-collar workers and shopkeepers, who by 1900 provided it with a daily circulation of almost a million.[48]

Harmsworth also pioneered with the illustrated tabloid newspaper, the Daily Mirror in 1904. It was aimed at the working class and offered a daily diet of what people "talked about in daily life: gossip, personalities, trivia, the extraordinary, sensations, popular entertainments and tit bits of facts." All these elements had been present in the European popular press and weekly magazines and were prominent in the American "yellow" press. Improvements in photography and photoengraving made possible the lavish use of photographs, and Harmsworth invested time and money in the perfection of this technology. He also imported journalists from America, notably Pomeroy Burton from Hearst's Evening Journal to further Americanize the Daily Mail.[49]

The success of Harmsworth's halfpenny morning and evening newspapers distressed the older, opinion paper editors, who especially regretted the political power Harmsworth attained in the process. But in their own newspapers, they found that they had to make at least some modifications in style and appearance or go out of business as the competition for readers intensified. English press historians agree that Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) led the modern press revolution in England.[50] But his teachers were James Gordon Bennett, Jr., Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, the English "new journalism" pioneers, Stead and O'Connor, plus several American-trained reporters and editors. What Harmsworth saw was what Pulitzer and other Americans had seen -- there was a new audience for daily reading matter, and this audience required a different approach to reach and hold it. After 1890 the big growth in European newspapers was in the direction of the popular, general-interest press and the illustrated tabloid, which Harmsworth had actually introduced to the U.S. in 1901 as a special edition of the New York World.[51]

In the first years of the 20th century, European journalists became better acquainted with the American press and American journalists as travel and correspondence increased between the two continents. Articles in European professional journals demonstrate a keen interest in the Western press, and several of the old themes continued. They still thought that the American press was newsy and enterprising, but might be toned down a bit. The English press was stodgy, needed enlivening, and so on But by now, English journalists also knew that American reporters made much better salaries than they did and had higher status. Several came to work in America, and some remained. They found that they quickly were sought out as experts in European politics, and they could turn this into extra money through writing editorials and magazine articles.[52]

By this time the Americans were conducting their own bitter campaign against the excesses of "yellow journalism." Europeans were attacking "Americanization" of the European newspapers. But the modern direction was set; all the criticism would be able to do was temper the excesses. As W. T. Stead had forecast when he left daily journalism for magazine work in 1895, the end of the century would bring more masses of readers, and the democratization of the press would continue, thereby "vulgarizing it to a certain extent." But, he added, "the papers which are read most are not written by gentlemen for gentlemen; they are papers put together by journalists for the multitude. That process will go on...and the press of the 20th century would become"...more homely, easy to read, commonplace and full of pictures and stories."

"Public criticism of the American press rose to a crescendo in the years preceeding World War I, and most American popular dailies began to make efforts to act more responsibly and tone down their sensationalism.[54] The modern, general interest newspaper with its independence and its journalistic enterprise had struck a precarious balance between commercialism and social responsibility. Journalists were working out standards of behavior and codes of ethics that made them think of themselves as professionals and guardians of the democratic freedom of speech and press, even though they knew they could never neglect the marketplace needs of telling good stories.[55]

Footnotes

[1]Anthony Smith in his The Newspaper: An International History (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979) is an exception.

[2]Z. L. White, "Western Journalism," Harper's Magazine, October 1888, pp. 678-699.

[3]Research for this paper was conducted during the author's sabbatical leave in 1980 in Europe sponsored by a grant from The Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, University of Michigan.

[4]Theodore Child, "The American Newspaper Press," Fortnightly Review, December 1, 1885, pp. 827-837. Manhattan had 1.3 million population, Brooklyn 600,000 and Jersey City 130,000. London in 1890 had 4.7 million population.

[5]White, "Western Journalism."

[6]Child, "The American Newspaper Press."

[7]Ibid.

[8]W. T. Stead, "The Future of Journalism," The Contemporary Review, November 1886, pp. 663-679.

[9]Matthew Arnold, "Up to Easter," The Nineteenth Century, May 1887, pp. 629-643.

[10]Matthew Arnold, "Civilization in the United States," The Nineteenth Century, April 1888, pp. 481-496.

[11]T. P. O'Connor, "The New Journalism," The New Review, October 1889, pp. 423-434.

[12]The Journalist, November 23, 1889. The Journalist started in 1884.

[13]The author reviewed this literature in U.S., French and English literary, opinion and professional journals.

[14]Richard Lee Smith, "The Rise of the Mass Press in 19th Century France," Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1976, pp. 94-99.

[15]Moise Albert Millaud, "Le Reportage" reprinted from Le Figaro, May 6, 1886, in Le Presse Francaise Annuaire, 1887, p. 625.

[16]Pierre Giffard, response to Millaud, reprinted from Le Figaro in Annuaire, May 7, 1886, p. 625.

[17]B. R. Mitchell, European Historical Statistics: 1750-1970 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 78. Brander Matthews, "Notes on Parisian Newspapers," The Century Magazine, December 1887, pp. 200-212.

[18]Arnot Reid, "The English and the American Press," The Nineteenth Century, August 1887, pp. 219-233. Articles speak always of male reporters, but by this time the American city newspapers had a few women reporters covering news and features. Some articles about "lady journalists" did appear.

[19]Arnot Reid, "The English and the American Press."

[20]The Journalist, July 20, 1888 (London) p. 2.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Paul Blouët, A Frenchman in America (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1891), pp. 364-369.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Paul Blouët (Max O'Rell), "Lively Journalism," North American Review, March 1890, pp. 364-369.

[25]Paul Blouët, Frenchman.

[26]Paul Blouët, Jonathan and His Continent (New York: Cassel, 1889), pp. 124-149.

[27]Paul Blouët, "Lively."

[28]Emile Zola, "Le Journal," les Annales politiques et litterares, July 22, 1894.

[29]The Journalist and Newspaper Proprietor (London), Sept. 2, 1893, p. 10.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Henrik Cavling, Fra Amerika (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1900), p. 90.

[32]Henrik Cavling, Fra Amerika, p. 190.

[33]Marion Marzolf, "Pioneers of 'New Journalism' in Early 20th Century Scandinavia, presented at AEJ Annual Convention, Houston, Texas, August 1979, and published in Pressens Aarbog, 1982, (Copenhagen, Denmark) pp. 132-147.

[34]James Stanford Bradshaw, "The Detroit Free Press in England," unpublished convention paper (Central Michigan University-Journalism).

[35]Peter de Mendelssohn, Zeitungstat Berlin (Berlin: Im Verlag Ullstein, 1959), pp. 82-87; Winfried B. Lerg and Michael Schmolke, Massenpresse und Volkszeitung (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968); Herman Ullstein, The Rise and Fall of the House of Ullstein (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1945).

[36]Hans Erman, August Scherl: Dämonie und Erfolg in Wilheminischer Zeit (Berlin: Universitas Verlag, 1954). German professional journals were apparently destroyed in the war, but English, French, Danish, Swedish, and American journals were searched.

[37]Hugh Awtrey, La Presse Anglo-Americaine de Paris (Paris: Granguillot & Buri, 1932).

[38]C. Bellanger, et. al, Historie Générale de la Presse Francaise, Vol. 3 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972).

[39]C. Bellanger, Historie, pp. 275-276. Le Figaro and Le Matin were 8 pages in 1908, but other newspapers were not that large in Paris until 1911. Le Matin was the first French newspaper to use photos on page one. This was in 1918. The first illustrated French paper was Excelsior in 1910.

[40]Awtrey, La Presse, p. 29.

[41]Awtrey, La Presse, p. 50.

[42]Awtrey, La Presse, p. 53.

[43]Awtrey, La Presse, p. 53.

[44]C. Bellanger, Historie, p. 278.

[45]R. D. Blumenfeld, R.D.B.'s Diary (London: William Heineman Ldt., 1930).

[46]Hamilton Fyfe, Northcliffe: An Intimate Biography (London: George Allen & Unwin Ldt., 1930), p. 67.

[47]Smith, Newspaper, p. 154.

[48]R.C.K. Ensor, England 1870-1914 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 312 and Francis Williams, Dangerous Estate: The Anatomy of Newspapers (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957), Chapter XI.

[49]Richard Heathcote Heindel, The American Impact on Great Britain 1898-1914 (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968).

[50]Blumefeld, Diary, p. 191.

[51]A. Maurice Low, "Tabloid Journalism: Its Causes and Effects," The Forum, March 1901, pp. 56-61; Pound and Harmsworth, Northcliffe, pp. 266-280. The tabloid did not catch on in the U.S. until the 1920's when two Americans brought the idea back from England and started the New York Illustrated Daily News.

[52]The Journalist and Newspaper Proprietor (London), January 26, 1901, pp. 14-15.

[53]W. T. Stead, "The Press in the Twentieth Century," Great Thoughts, March 1895, pp. 363-364.

[54]Delos F. Wilcos, "The American Newspaper; A Study in Social Psychology," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, July 1900, 16, pp. 56-92, is a good example of the increasing sophistication of the criticism.

[55]Michael Schudson, Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers (N.Y.: Basic Books, Inc., 1967) deals with development in detail.